

STATE OF MAINE  
PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION

Docket No. 97-286

July 8, 1997

PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION  
Inquiry Into Requirements  
That Interexchange Carriers Specify  
in Writing Terms and Rates for  
Services Offered, as well as  
Providing Notice to Subscribers of  
Rate Increases and the Sale or  
Transfer of the Carrier

NOTICE OF INQUIRY

WELCH, Chairman; NUGENT and HUNT, Commissioners

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## **I. SUMMARY**

In this Notice, we open an inquiry to obtain information to assist the Commission in determining whether a rulemaking should be pursued to require interexchange carriers to: 1) specify to their customers in writing the terms, rates and conditions of services offered to them; 2) notify subscribers in writing before initiating any rate increases;<sup>1</sup> and 3) notify subscribers in writing of a sale or transfer in ownership of the carrier. This inquiry solicits comments from all interested parties on these issues.

## **II. BACKGROUND**

During the 1997 legislative session, L.D. 1788, "An Act to Require Notice to Telephone Subscribers of the Sale or Transfer of an Interexchange carrier or a Change in Rates" was introduced and was ultimately carried over until next year's session by the Legislature's Joint Standing Committee on Utilities and Energy. The purpose of the bill was to provide additional information to telephone consumers regarding changes in their interexchange service. Discussions on this bill in committee also included the question of whether interexchange carriers should also be required to provide the terms, conditions, and rates of services offered to customers in writing. The Committee agreed to carry over L.D. 1788 to next year's session, but also requested that the Commission consider, in the context of its rulemaking efforts, the need for these requirements.

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<sup>1</sup> Chapter 280 §10 (A) currently requires interexchange carriers to notify customers at least 15 days prior to the effective date of a rate increase of 20% or more for any individual interexchange service offered by the interexchange carrier using a bill insert or separate mailing.

This Inquiry is the first step by the Commission to ascertain the need for, and scope of, any rulemaking.

### **III. ISSUES TO BE ADDRESSED**

We invite interested parties to comment on the following issues:

1. Should the Commission undertake a rulemaking to require interexchange carriers to provide a customer with written terms, conditions and rates of all services they provide to that customer? Why or why not?
2. Should the Commission undertake a rulemaking to require interexchange carriers to provide written notice to their customers of a change or transfer in ownership? Why or why not?
3. Should the Commission undertake a rulemaking to require interexchange carriers providing service in Maine to provide written notice to their customers of any rate increase prior to the increase's taking effect? Should the amount of the increase be a relevant factor? Why or why not?
4. Are there measures other than rulemaking that could be taken to address the issues previously described that the Commission should consider? Please describe.

### **IV. COMMENTS**

Interested persons may file comments or answers to the above questions. An original and six copies of comments should be filed with the Administrative Director, Maine Public Utilities Commission, 18 State House Station, Augusta, ME 04333-0018 by August 4, 1997.

Accordingly, we

### **O R D E R**

1. That an inquiry is opened as described in the body of this Notice, pursuant to Part 12 of Chapter 110 of the Commission's Rules;
2. That the Administrative Director shall send copies of this Notice to all interexchange telephone utilities authorized to operate in Maine;

3. That the Administrative Director shall send copies of this Notice to all entities that have petitions pending before the Commission for authority to provide interexchange telecommunications services in Maine;

4. That the Administrative Director shall send a copy of this Notice to the Office of the Public Advocate; and

5. That the Administrative Director shall send a copy of this Notice to all parties on the service list for docketed case #94-123.

6. That the Public Information Coordinator shall post a copy of this Notice on the Commission's World Wide Web page (<http://www.state.me.us/mpuc/>).

Dated at Augusta, Maine this 8th day of July, 1997.

BY ORDER OF THE COMMISSION

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Dennis L. Keschl  
Administrative Director

COMMISSIONERS VOTING FOR: Welch  
Nugent

COMMISSIONER ABSENT: Hunt